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SUBJECT: UNMEE CONSULTATIONS, MAY 14, 2008

1. This is an action message. USUN is instructed to draw from the following discussion elements during the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) consultations on May 14, 2008.

Begin discussion elements:

-We welcome the Presidential Statement of April 30, reject Eritrea's claim that it maintained good cooperation with UNMEE, and again reiterate the Security Council's condemnation of Eritrea's lack of cooperation, which has undermined the Mission's mandate for years, and as the February 15 Statement by the President of the Security Council noted, gravely contravenes UN Security Council resolutions. There can be no cause or justification for Eritrea's abusive conduct towards the Mission and its personnel.

-We remind the Security Council that the restrictions Eritrea has placed on UNMEE represent a serious threat to the credibility of this body, and pose serious implications for the safety and security of peacekeepers deployed elsewhere. The U.S. holds Eritrea responsible for the safety and security of the rear guard, remaining UNMEE civilian personnel, and any remaining UN and contingency-owned equipment in its territory.

-The relocation of most UNMEE personnel from Eritrea has removed an important element of stability in the region: Eritrea has remilitarized the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ); diplomatic efforts have yielded no progress; tensions along the border are high; and there is no communication between the parties.

-It is essential that we and the parties reaffirm and remain committed to the Algiers Agreements and Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, and that Ethiopia and Eritrea make efforts to implement them completely. We call upon the parties to not resort to the use or threat of force.

-To put this commitment into practice, we call upon the parties to agree to meet periodically, under the auspices of the UN if desired, to exchange information on military and other activities along the border. This is a way to avoid misunderstandings and address incidents. The parties should also agree on mutual redeployments in sensitive areas.

-Additionally, we call upon the parties to take advantage of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's offer of his good offices as a means to facilitate dialogue.

-The Council must recognize the facts on the ground, and should expeditiously make an affirmative action to end UNMEE, definitively closing the books on this operation while thanking UNMEE's troop contributors for their service. Ideally, the Council would immediately establish a follow on UN presence that can most effectively assist the parties to resolve their impasse.

-We appreciate Belgium's initiative to develop a way forward. A UN presence in the border region may be helpful since it could focus on monitoring activities in the TSZ and provide a channel of communications between the parties.

-We would consider an observer mission that is based only in Ethiopia with a primary focus on observation, to the extent possible, of the areas from which UNMEE was compelled to relocate. We are also willing to consider other arrangements that are consistent with the Report of the Secretary General and agreeable to the parties. A decision to establish a UN presence, however, should be made quickly.

-One element of the proposal, a task force on demarcation, raises questions. Our focus should be on bringing the parties into dialogue on how to implement the decisions of the Ethiopia Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC) to develop a workable boundary regime in accordance with the Algiers Agreement--it is up to the parties to decide how to implement the EEBC decision. The international community should stand ready to facilitate these efforts in a strictly non-partisan fashion. However, we fully agree that the parties must engage on issues that prevent normalized relations. This is the key to reducing tensions and strengthening regional stability. Unless this occurs, there can be no progress.

-The Road Map proposal and appointment of an envoy may prove

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to be a helpful way forward, but should have the support of both parties. Additionally, we would appreciate clarification about how this way forward would relate to Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's offer of his good offices, and how it could help to resolve the impasse.

-We would like to conclude by again extending our thanks to the Troop Contributing Countries. We recognize their contributions, and note their sustained support even during times of increased insecurity of the Mission.

-The U.S. also again thanks and recognizes UNMEE personnel for their hard work and efforts, and notes that they have made great contributions in maintaining peace and security in the region, often under dangerous and precarious circumstances.

End discussion elements.
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